

Testimony of Sara LeMaster, MPAP
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Community Health Center Association of Connecticut
SB 213 and HB 5045

Distinguished leadership of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Sara LeMaster and I am the manager of government relations and public policy for the Community Health Center Association of Connecticut. I am submitting testimony on SB 213 and HB 5045.

The Community Health Center Association of Connecticut is Connecticut's primary care association, which supports the work of 16 of Connecticut's health centers. Connecticut's health centers collectively serve over 380,000 residents every year, and specialize in providing care for traditionally underserved communities. Health centers do not turn people away based on their ability to pay for services, and patients have access to same-day medical, dental, and behavioral health services. Twenty percent of health center patients identify as Black, and 48% identify as Hispanic or Latino. A majority (58%) receive Medicaid benefits¹.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our health centers have been working diligently to protect our communities and support our public health infrastructure. Health centers have provided over 930,000 COVID tests and fully vaccinated over 395,000 residents since August of 2020², all while continuing to provide care for the most vulnerable.

Connecticut's health centers serve residents in every legislative district. Health centers operate over 100 locations throughout Connecticut and employ over 4,000 people³ and have an estimated economic impact of over \$800 million⁴.

Regarding SB 213 AN ACT ALLOWING MEDICAL ASSISTANTS TO ADMINISTER VACCINES:

CHCACT **supports** this bill, which would increase the number of available vaccinators in Connecticut. Under current Connecticut law, only doctors, APRNs, and pharmacists are legally permitted to administer vaccines. This bill would give health centers and other health care entities additional vaccinating staff, which would vastly expand the capabilities of our vaccine operations.

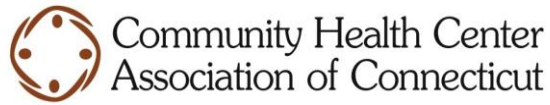
Administration of vaccines does not require the level of education and training that doctors and APRNs have, as 48 other states successfully train medical assistants to complete this task safely and effectively. The current requirement that only doctors and APRN's be allowed to administer vaccines increases costs

¹ 2021 UDS data

² <https://www.nachc.org/research-and-data/covid-19-vaccine-testing-data-by-state/>

³ 2021 UDS data

⁴ <https://www.nachc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Economic-Impact-Infographic-2.pdf>



in our healthcare system by requiring that only highly-skilled medical staff conduct a task that could be done by a well-trained medical assistant.

Regarding HB 5045 AN ACT REDUCING LEAD POISONING:

CHCACT **supports** this legislation, as it increases the threshold for treatment for lead poisoning. This bill will have a positive impact on community health, as it will allow health professionals to identify and diagnose cases of lead poisoning more quickly.

In 2020, 106,000 children were health center patients, and over 75% of health center patients live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Lead poisoning is more common in children who live in housing that has not been updated or repainted, and chipping lead paint is a very common cause of lead poisoning in children. It is also more likely to affect children due to high amounts of heavy metal absorption in the early stages of human development, and early detection of elevated lead levels will lead to more children receiving treatment for lead poisoning. By decreasing the reporting threshold, this will also give healthcare providers better data with respect to population health and help more children access treatment.

Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health, growth, and development, and have long-term impacts on a child's life. Because lead poisoning is more prevalent among children living in older housing, it is an issue that overwhelmingly affects children living in poverty.

I'd like to thank the committee for raising these bills and giving me the opportunity to testify.